



Ninety-Eighth Legislature - Second Session - 2004
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 1116

Chairperson: **Kermit A. Brashear**
Committee: **Judiciary**
Date of Hearing: **January 29, 2004**

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

The ultimate goal of LB 1116 is budgetary. The budget of the Department of Correctional Services has grown at a significant rate over the last decade, and is one of the most significant growth areas in the state's total budget. The Department's budget has increased by more than 50% in the last four years alone. This growth is primarily a result of the growth in our state's prison population. Just since 1998, the number of inmates in the Nebraska system has grown by more than 20%. Nebraska's correctional system currently has approximately 4,000 inmates in facilities that are designed for only slightly more than 3,000.

If the State of Nebraska wishes to get the corrections budget under control, then it must find a better way to manage the numbers of inmates in the prison system, so that our prison population does not continue to outgrow our resources. LB 1116 would seek to accomplish this through two simple measures:

1. By declaring it a goal that the population of the Nebraska prison system should be no more than 3,600 inmates by January 1, 2006; and
2. By directing the Department of Correctional Services to develop a strategic action plan to accomplish this goal.

The inmate population goal set in LB 1116 represents a population that is roughly 20% over the Nebraska corrections system's design capacity. In fact, the 3,600 inmate goal is a very realistic number, which is slightly more than the system's average monthly population (3561) in the year 2000.

LB 1116 also outlines the elements that are to be included in the strategic action plan, which is to be completed by the Department of Correctional Services and submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2005. In developing the plan, the Department is directed to place emphasis on improved procedures for identifying inmates who are favorable candidates for early release. The Department is also directed to develop plans for programs that would improve inmate rehabilitation and transition planning, so that inmates would move more quickly and efficiently through the corrections system, and be less likely to return after they are released into the community.

Principal Introducer:

Senator Dwite Pedersen